

~Dress like Clara Barton~



Clara Barton (1821-1912), a former school teacher and Patent Office clerk, worked as a nurse during the Civil War (1861-1865).

She collected and organized supplies as well as treated the wounded on the battlefields. Miss Barton provided aid to the sick and injured on both sides. She also established an office to locate missing soldiers of war. After learning of the International Red Cross, based in Switzerland, which aided victims of war, Clara Barton founded the American Red Cross in 1881. Her organization also provided assistance during times of peace and natural disasters. Clara Barton was a woman who, through determination and perseverance, was able to accomplish what few women of her time were able to do.

The clothes that Clara Barton wore were very different from the fashions and styles worn today. In order to appear as she would have during this time you may want to read the following about what she would have worn during the **Civil War**. She would have worn a long skirt that came down to her feet or the floor, usually of a dark color.



Hoops were not worn while working. Sleeves were long and hats or bonnets were worn outdoors. Women wore work outfits often protected by an apron or pinafore and did not wear pants.

During Clara Barton's time she would have worn what is called a hoop skirt. This was a large petticoat type article of clothing that made the dress stand out several feet from the legs. The dresses of the time had a very high, straight waist line. Shirts were worn tucked into skirts and necklines were very close to the nape of the neck with collars closed. Shirts were either buttoned or fastened up the front. The style of sleeves during the Civil War was something only seen during that time. They were very full at the elbows and gathered at the wrists. The fashion of the day was to emphasize the width of the shoulders and the narrowness of the waist. Clara Barton's hair would have been parted in the middle of her head and pulled back away from her face with a low bun at the nape of her neck.



Bangs were not seen during this time. All hair was pulled off the face. Women wore their hair so that the fullest part of it was at or below their ears. This brought attention to the width of their face.

In 1881 Clara Barton founded the American **Red Cross**. Styles of clothing had changed by then and so had Clara Barton's. Large hoops were no longer worn beneath skirts. Rather, skirts were narrower and fuller in the back. The waist line was lower, yet it still emphasized the narrowness of the waist. The neckline was now higher. Collars extended several inches upward from the bottom of the throat. Sleeves were now puffed out at the shoulders instead of the elbows. They were also very snug and closefitting around the forearms and wrists. Hair styles had also changed. There was no longer any desire to emphasize the width of the head. Hair was still pulled back away from the face but it was now piled high on top of the head to give a person height. Bangs, as we see them now, were still not yet in style. However some of the hair piled on top of their head was sometimes pushed forward onto their forehead which gave an appearance of bangs. It was proper for women of the day to wear hats when outside. Clara Barton wore a small hat with ribbons and fake flowers on it. You may want to consider doing the same.



Make your own Red Cross Pin:

Like you see in the picture on the left, Clara Barton often wore a Red Cross pin on the front of her collar. You can make your own Red Cross Pin.

1. Cut out a circle on white paper about 1 ½ inches in diameter.
2. In the center of the circle draw a red cross like the one worn by Clara Barton in the photograph.
3. Tape or pin this piece of paper to the front of your collar.

Key Characteristics:



Civil War:

- Skirts were floor length and worn with a hoop underneath.*
- Sleeves were large at the elbows.
- Dresses had high waists.
- Hair was parted in the middle and pulled back away from the face to the nape of the neck.

Red Cross:

- Floor length skirts, fuller in the back.
- Sleeves were large at shoulders and narrow at forearms and wrists.
- High collars and lower waists.
- Hair piled high on top of the head.

* A hoop would not have been worn on the battlefields or in hospitals because it would get in the way.

Things to Remember:

- You should wear a long skirt.
- Wear a long sleeve blouse, the larger the sleeves the better, that has buttons up the front. Remember to button the top button at the collar and the buttons on the wrists.
- Your hair should be parted in the middle and pulled back into a low bun or pulled back and put in a very high bun. If your hair is not long enough to be put in a bun, just take some bobby pins and secure it away from the face.
- Remember that all bangs should be pinned back away from the face with hair pins, not barrettes.
- If you are representing Clara Barton during her years in the Civil War you may want to consider using a canvas bag to represent the supplies she would have carried with her to the battlefield.



Note: Find a pair of simple shoes, not sneakers, to wear with the rest of your costume. Wear dark, plain cotton or wool tights or socks. Something you have from home is fine.



Photograph courtesy of Allison Dixon



Make your own Snood:

1. You may be able to find your own snood at a local drug store, but if not you can make one at home.
2. Buy a large lace doily from your local craft store.
3. Thread a plain piece of ribbon through the edges all the way around the doily.
4. Pull the ribbon so that the lace gathers and wear on the back of your head.

Make your own Bonnet:

1. To make your own Civil War bonnet you will need construction paper, tape, and ribbon.
2. Tape two pieces of regular 8x10 paper together (the eight inch sides are flush). On one of the long sides cut three 2in. slits on each side of your center line.
3. Fold these cut sections up. Bend the paper so that it fits around your head.
4. Notice that the folded tabs will cross over each other. Tape them in place.
5. Tape ribbon to both bottom corners of the front to make a tie.



Make your own hat:

To make your own hat similar to what Clara Barton would have worn, you could purchase a small straw hat, some wide ribbon, and a few fake flowers. Glue the ribbon around the brim and glue the flowers to the front of the hat. All of these items can be found at your local craft store.

Additional information on Clara Barton's life and accomplishments as well as a photo gallery are available on-line at www.nps.gov/clba. Clara Barton National Historic Site, 5801 Oxford Road, Glen Echo, Maryland 20812. 301-320-1410. Images, except as noted, Clara Barton NHS Collection. Handout developed by Clara Barton NHS Volunteer Allison Dixon. Clara Barton NHS is administered by the George Washington Memorial Parkway.